

Gwich'in leaders correct Representative Don Young's misleading statements on the Gwich'in Nation.

Representative Don Young (R, AK) misrepresented himself as Gwich'in and disrespected the Gwich'in representatives who were invited to testify at the March 26, 2019 U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Energy and Minerals hearing on H.R. 1146, *The Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act*. Representative Young made several incorrect and inappropriate remarks, including:

The Gwich'in Chiefs felt the need to respond and stand behind their delegates.

- Mr. Young stated "My tribe is Gwich'in." This is false. Mr. Young isn't Gwich'in, and is in fact originally from California, not Alaska. Having a native spouse does not confer tribal membership, nor does it provide an inherent understanding of native issues or a right to speak on behalf of tribes. Mr. Young is not an appointed member of the Gwich'in Steering Committee, nor is he a member of any Alaska Native tribe.
- Mr. Young stated the Gwich'in are "foreigners" and do not live on the refuge. The Gwich'in call the coastal plain area under consideration in H.R. 1146 *'Izhit gwat'san gwandait goodlit'*, "the sacred place life begins." The Gwich'in view this area as too sensitive and sacred to visit, as it serves as the calving ground for the Porcupine Caribou Herd. For millennia the Gwich'in have lived within the boundary of the Porcupine Caribou Herd's range, and relied on the herd for sustenance and our way of life. The Gwich'in live in fifteen villages spread across a vast area extending from northeast Alaska to the northern Yukon and Northwest Territories in Canada. The ancestral homeland of the Gwich'in follows the migratory route of the caribou. Oil and gas activities on the Coastal Plain would inflict devastating impacts on the Porcupine Caribou Herd, and negatively affect Gwich'in subsistence and cultural practices.
- There have been assertions that the Gwich'in representatives are engaged in the fight to protect the Refuge because of "free trips" outside of Alaska, suggesting Gwich'in representatives are engaging in tourism. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Gwich'in representatives make the arduous journey from Alaska and Canada to DC, which requires a minimum of two flights and 14 plus hours of travel time, to defend the traditional calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou herd in front of US officials and leadership. This means spending time away from families and taking unpaid leave to fight to protect the refuge. We do this because of the importance of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and its birthing grounds to our identity and way of life, and the need to protect the herd for future generations. Our very survival depends on its protection.

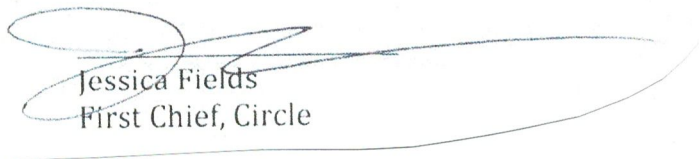
Representative Young does not speak on behalf of the Gwich'in Nation.

The Gwich'in Steering Committee was created by the Gwich'in Nation to speak with a unified voice on behalf of our tribes across the United States and Canada on the issue of protection of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

For more information on the Gwich'in Steering Committee and the Gwich'in Nation, visit <http://ourarcticrefuge.org/> or contact **Gwich'in Steering Committee**




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